UNITED
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Secretariat

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6 February 1996

INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Secretary-General

Subject: IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY DECISIONS ON THE PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

1. My proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 1/ reflected determined efforts to initiate maximum efficiencies throughout the Secretariat. At the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, Member States welcomed both the timeliness and the new format of the proposed programme budget presentation and expressed support for my demonstrated commitment and that of senior management to do "more with less". They welcomed also the efficiency gains included in the proposed programme budget and my intention to pursue further efficiencies during the course of the 1996-1997 biennium.

2. The budget ultimately approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/215 A of 23 December 1995 requires me to make significant additional reductions. The Assembly decided on appropriations for 1996-1997 at the level of $2,608 million, including reductions of $50 million to be obtained through an increase in the budgeted vacancy rate to 6.4 per cent for staff in all categories, and a further reduction of $104 million to be achieved through additional savings.

3. Implementing budget reductions as decided in resolution 50/215 A will require a balanced approach in reducing both staff and non-staff costs. In this regard, it is planned that, to the extent possible, savings will be found in such non-staff expenditures as travel, consultants, equipment and furniture, buildings maintenance and alteration, and general operating expenses. Cutbacks in these areas are, however, expected to result in relatively modest savings, in that, as a whole, they represent a small portion of the regular budget. It is evident, therefore, that budgetary reductions of this magnitude cannot be effected without a significant reduction in the level of staff-related costs.

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4. I have already asked programme managers to conduct a review of their programmes to identify ways to achieve further savings in their respective areas of responsibility. Programme managers have been requested to complete their reviews by 14 February. Over the next few weeks, I will be assessing the results of these reviews, and I will submit a progress report to the General Assembly on the implementation of resolution 50/215 A by 31 March. It is my responsibility to reduce expenditures to the level approved by the General Assembly. I am committed to doing so while, at the same time, minimizing the effect on programmes and continuing to improve the efficiency of the Organization. I am also committed to minimizing the impact on the staff. As I indicated to Member States, the international civil service must not be undermined.

5. I intend to keep staff fully informed of developments. Appropriate staff-management consultations will be conducted, in accordance with the requirements of Chapter VIII of the Staff Regulations and Rules. I would welcome suggestions from individual staff members, drawing on their experience and knowledge of the Organization, on possible means of achieving efficiencies and cost reductions.

6. Supervisors and managers will be given guidance in structural change, efficiency management and downsizing. Particular emphasis will be placed on ensuring that the process is conducted with full consideration of the implications for individual staff members. Assistance in responding to the new situation will be provided to individual staff members. Advisory outplacement support and counselling will be available for staff members who request them. I will request the support of Member States in assisting staff members and their families, where necessary, with regard to visa, employment and related issues.

7. I count on all staff members, including those serving in representational roles, to work supportively with programme managers to achieve the savings mandated by the General Assembly.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/50/6/Rev.1), vols. I and II.